AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) A method, implemented using a computer system, of managing delivery carriers, comprising

receiving delivery data from mail processors;

determining, using the computer system, routes for delivery based on business rules applied to ~~using~~ the delivery data ~~and a set of business rules~~, wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation;

assigning, using the computer system, mail items to delivery carriers based on the determined routes;

~~measuring the performance of the delivery carriers;~~

transmitting, using the computer system, mail item assignment information to the mail processors;

monitoring the determined routes ~~after the mail items are assigned~~, wherein monitoring includes:

. receiving update information from the delivery carriers while the mail items are being delivered on the determined routes, wherein the update information relates to at least one of the routes for delivery and a capacity of the delivery carriers; and

dynamically reassigning the mail items to different delivery carriers based on the update information received from the delivery carriers during monitoring.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining routes includes processing active, planned, and closed routes.

3.   (Currently amended) .The method of claim 1, wherein ~~determining routes using~~ the business rules ~~includes using~~ further comprise cost consideration information.

4.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein ~~using~~ cost consideration information ~~further~~ includes overriding a lower cost option due to the carrier contract obligation ~~using information regarding contractual obligations to the delivery carriers~~.

5.   (Currently amended) The method of claim [[4]]3, wherein ~~using~~ cost consideration information ~~further~~ includes determining a lowest cost for service window.

6.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein ~~using~~ cost considerations information includes ~~using~~ delivery option information.

7.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 6, wherein ~~using~~ delivery option information ~~further~~ includes evaluating data regarding a combination of at least one ~~of~~ aircraft, at least one train[[s]], at least one motor vehicle[[s]], ~~and~~ or at least one ship[[s]], as a means of transporting the mail items.

8.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein ~~using~~ the business rules further ~~includes~~ comprise using route delay information.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein using route delay information further includes receiving weather information.

10. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein using route delay information further includes receiving route closing information from the delivery carriers.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising creating an assignment manifest.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein creating the assignment manifest includes generating one of a hardcopy and an electronic copy of the assignment manifest.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising transmitting the assignment manifest to at least one delivery carrier.

14. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising tracking deliveries of the mail items using performance management tools.

15. (Currently amended) A system for managing delivery carriers, comprising:

means for receiving delivery data from mail processors;

means for determining routes for delivery based on business rules applied to ~~using~~ the delivery data ~~and a set of business rules~~, wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation;

means for assigning mail items to delivery carriers based on the determined routes;

~~means for measuring the performance of the delivery carriers;~~

means for transmitting mail item assignment information to the mail processors;

means for monitoring the determined routes ~~after the mail items are assigned~~, wherein monitoring includes:

receiving update information from the delivery carriers while the mail items are being delivered on the determined routes, wherein the update information relates to at least one of the routes for delivery and a capacity of the delivery carriers; and

means for dynamically reassigning the mail items to different delivery carriers based on the update information received from the delivery carriers during monitoring.

16. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the means for determining routes includes means for processing active, planned, and closed routes.

17. (Currently amended) The system of claim 15, wherein the ~~means for determining routes using the~~ business rules <u>further comprise</u> ~~includes means for using~~ cost consideration information.

18. (Currently amended) The system of claim 17, wherein ~~the means for using~~ cost consideration information ~~further~~ includes <u>overriding a lower cost option due to the carrier contract obligation</u> ~~means for using information regarding contractual obligations to the delivery carriers~~.

19.   (Currently amended) The system of claim ~~18~~17, wherein the ~~means for using~~ cost consideration information further includes ~~means for~~ determining a lowest cost for service window.

20.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 17, wherein the ~~means for using~~ cost consideration information includes ~~means for using~~ delivery option information.

21.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 20, wherein the ~~means for using~~ delivery option information ~~further~~ includes ~~means for~~ evaluating data regarding <u>a combination of</u> at least one ~~of~~ aircraft, <u>at least one</u> train[[s]], <u>at least one</u> motor vehicle[[s]], ~~and~~ <u>or at least one</u> ship[[s]]<u>,</u> for transporting the mail items.

22.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 17, wherein the ~~means for determining routes using the~~ business rules further ~~includes means for using~~ <u>comprise</u> route delay information.

23.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 22, wherein the ~~means for using~~ route delay information further includes ~~means for~~ <u>overriding a route choice after</u> receiving weather information.

24.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 22, wherein the ~~means for using~~ route delay information further includes ~~means for~~ <u>overriding a route choice after</u> receiving route closing information from the delivery carriers.

25.   (Original) The system of claim 15, further comprising means for creating an assignment manifest.

26. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein the means for creating the assignment manifest includes means for generating one of a hardcopy and an electronic copy of the assignment manifest.

27. (Original) The system of claim 26, further comprising means for transmitting the assignment manifest to at least one delivery carrier.

28. (Original) The system of claim 15, further comprising means for tracking deliveries of the mail items.

29. (Currently amended) A solid computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing stages, comprising:

> receiving delivery data from mail processors;

> determining routes for delivery based on business rules applied to ~~using~~ the delivery data ~~and a set of business rules~~, wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation;

> assigning mail items to delivery carriers based on the determined routes;

> ~~measuring the performance of the delivery carriers;~~

> transmitting mail item assignment information to the mail processors;

> monitoring the determined routes ~~after the mail items are assigned~~, wherein monitoring includes:

>> receiving update information from the delivery carriers while the mail items are being delivered on the determined routes, wherein the update information relates to at least one of the routes for delivery and a capacity of the delivery carriers; and

dynamically reassigning the mail items to different delivery carriers based on the update information received from the delivery carriers during monitoring.

30. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, wherein determining routes includes processing active, planned, and closed routes.

31. (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, wherein determining routes using the business rules includes further comprise using cost consideration information.

32. (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein using cost consideration information further includes overriding a lower cost option due to the carrier contract obligation using carrier contract information.

33. (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 3231, wherein using cost consideration information further includes determining a lowest cost for service window.

34. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein using cost consideration information includes using delivery option information.

35. (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 34, wherein using delivery option information further includes evaluating data regarding a combination of at least one of aircraft, at least one train[[s]], at least one motor vehicle[[s]], and or at least one ship[[s]], as a means of transporting the mail items.

36.   (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein ~~using~~ the business rules further ~~includes~~ comprise using route delay information.

37.   (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 36, wherein using route delay information further includes receiving weather information.

38.   (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 36, wherein using route delay information further includes receiving route closing information from the delivery carriers.

39.   (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, further comprising computer-executable instructions for creating an assignment manifest.

40.   (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 39, wherein creating the assignment manifest includes generating one of a hardcopy and an electronic copy of the assignment manifest.

41.   (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 40, further comprising computer-executable instructions for transmitting the assignment manifest to at least one delivery carrier.

42.   (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, further comprising computer-executable instructions for tracking deliveries of the mail items.

43.   (Currently amended) A system for managing delivery carriers, comprising:

at least one server containing a mail assignment engine, the mail assignment engine operative to:

receive delivery data from mail processors;

determine routes for delivery <u>based on business rules applied to</u> ~~using~~ the delivery data ~~and a set of business rules~~, <u>wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation</u>;

assign mail items to carriers based on the determined routes;

~~receive performance measurements of carriers;~~

transmit mail item assignment information to the mail processors;

monitor the determined routes ~~after the mail items are assigned~~, wherein monitoring <u>includes</u>:

receiving update information from the delivery carriers while the mail items are being delivered on the predetermined routes, wherein the update information relates to at least one of the routes for delivery and a capacity of the delivery carriers; and

dynamically reassign the mail items to different delivery carriers based on the update information received from the delivery carriers during monitoring.

44.   (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein a transaction concentrator is used to manage communications for the at least one server.

45.   (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein the mail assignment engine determines the routes using a database including files for active, planned, and closed routes.

46.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 43, wherein the ~~mail assignment engine determines the routes using~~ business rules ~~including~~ further comprise cost consideration information.

47.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the cost consideration information ~~further~~ includes overriding a lower cost option due to the carrier contract obligation ~~information~~.

48.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the cost consideration[[s]] information ~~further~~ includes a lowest cost for service window.

49.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the cost consideration[[s]] information includes ~~further include~~ delivery option information.

50.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 49, wherein the delivery option information ~~further~~ includes information for evaluating data regarding a combination of at least one ~~of~~ aircraft, at least one train[[s]], at least one motor vehicle[[s]], ~~and~~ or at least one ship[[s]].

51.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the business rules further ~~include~~ comprise route delay information.

52.   (Original) The system of claim 51, wherein the route delay information further includes weather information.

53.   (Original) The system of claim 51, wherein the route delay information further includes route closing information received from the delivery carriers.

54.   (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein the mail assignment engine is further operative to create an assignment manifest.

55.   (Original) The system of claim 54, wherein the assignment manifest is one of a hardcopy and an electronic file for delivery to at least one of the delivery carriers.

56.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43, further comprising performance management tools for tracking deliveries of the mail items.

57.   (Currently amended) A computer for tagging mail items and for executing a software component, the software component including computer-executable instructions for:

   receiving delivery data;

   transmitting delivery data to a mail item assignment system;

   receiving an assignment data file containing information regarding assignment of mail items from the mail item assignment system after the mail item assignment system assigns the mail items to a delivery carrier and an associated delivery route, wherein the assignment is based on business rules applied to the delivery data and wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation;

receiving information indicating reassignment of the mail items after the

mail item assignment system dynamically reassigns the mail items

to a different delivery carrier based on monitoring the delivery route

after the mail items are assigned to the delivery route, wherein

monitoring includes receiving update information from the

previously assigned delivery carrier while the mail items are being

delivered on the assigned delivery route, the update information

including information concerning at least one of a previously

assigned delivery route and a capacity of the previously assigned

delivery carrier; and

printing labels containing mail item routing information.

58.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

measuring the performance of the delivery carriers; and

adjusting at least one business rule ~~of the set of business rules~~ based on
the measured performance information.

59.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 15, further comprising:

means for measuring the performance of the delivery carriers; and

means for adjusting at least one business rule ~~of the set of business rules~~
based on the measured performance information.

60.   (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, further
comprising:

measuring the performance of the delivery carriers; and

instructions for performing a stage comprising adjusting at least one business rule ~~of the set of business rules~~ based on the measured performance information.

61.   (Currently amended) The system of claim 43, wherein the mail assignment engine is operative to<u>:</u>

<u>receive performance measurements of carriers; and</u>

adjust at least one business rule ~~of the set of business rules~~ based on the ~~measured~~ performance<u> measurements</u> ~~information~~.